

VZCZCXRO2084
PP RUEHBZ RUEHMR RUEHMR
DE RUEHKI #0285/01 0861145
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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 2941
RUEHBZ/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9379
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000285

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2019

TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV BE CG

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE U.S.-EU ENGAGEMENT ON SECURITY SECTOR
(MILITARY) REFORM

REF: USDEL SECTO 3202341

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Van der Geer visits with EU delegation

¶1. (SBU) On March 18 EU Great Lakes Envoy Roeland van der Geer met with Ambassador, DCM and USAID director to discuss possible U.S.-EU cooperation in the area of Security Sector Reform. Van der Geer came with a large retinue including General Jean-Paul Michel, head of European Security Cooperation in Kinshasa; Joao Duarte, deputy chief of the European Union mission here; a representative of EUPOL, the EU's police cooperation mission; several EU mission staffers; and two employees of the Czech Embassy, representing the EU presidency. Van de Geer noted that the EU no longer used the term "SSR" (security sector reform), as it lacked precision. The EU's main focus will be "military reform," although it would continue to contribute to strengthen the Congolese National Police Force through EUPOL, and judicial reform through several ongoing programs.

¶2. (SBU) The EU was particularly interested in greater cooperation with the U.S. on military reform. The EU had already completed a comprehensive census of the Congolese military (FARDC), which had shown that GDRC estimates of the FARDC's force levels were highly inflated. The EU had also devised a method to ensure that soldiers were being paid on a regular basis, historically a major cause of discontent within the FARDC's rank and file. The EU, van der Geer explained, believed that the FARDC's reform plan, as modified by Defense Minister Charles Mwanda Nsimba, was imperfect but nonetheless a far better document than the plan previously submitted by former Defense Minister Chikez Diemu. The Mwanda plan could, at the very least, serve as the basis of discussions between the Defense Ministry and foreign donors.

¶3. (SBU) General Michel lauded increased U.S.-EU military liaison efforts in recent weeks. Van der Geer explained that the EU wanted to make military reform a high priority and wanted to engage with the U.S. as well as other non-EU donors, particularly the South Africans, Angolans and Chinese. He asked the U.S. for its views on how to bring these important partners, who have significant military-to-military programs in the DRC, into the mainstream military donors club. He noted that the Dutch had worked closely with the South Africans in a triangular arrangement involving Dutch financing for South African training of the FARDC.

U.S. proposes monthly meetings of DCM's and DATT's

¶4. (C) Ambassador Garvelink replied that military reform was also a high priority for the U.S., noting that he had recently created an internal embassy working group on this issue. He referred to ongoing efforts to launch the U.S.-sponsored Rapid Reaction Force training program in Kisangani, which was designed to be a model battalion to be emulated by other FARDC units. He referred to agreements between the U.S. and GDRC on who should be selected for the training. In the area of intra-donor community coordination and cooperation he expressed U.S. support for the idea of inclusiveness, i.e., that the South Africans, Angolans and Chinese should also participate. He noted that the DCM and DATT would soon meet with their Belgian counterparts to discuss how to re-energize donor community coordination. The U.S., the ambassador said, wanted to institute regular meetings of all donors to include DCM's and DATT's. The Belgians, as the most active EU military cooperation provider, would be invited to join the U.S. setting up the DCM-DATT mechanism. (Note: Reftel refers to possible U.S.-Belgian cooperation this area as discussed at March 6 meeting between Secretary Clinton and Belgian fonmin De Gucht; this encounter and discussions between the two ministers were not mentioned when ambassador referred to our upcoming meeting with the Belgians. End note.) Van der Geer agreed this was a good initiative and said the EU would support it fully.

¶5. (C) Comment: The EU has clearly not given up on SSR, i.e., military reform. They hope to enlist U.S. support to move the process forward, which has been stuck for some time. We note that we are of like mind in supporting more inclusive coordination to include the South Africans,

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Angolans, and Chinese. Depending on the outcome of our meeting next week with the Belgians (the U.S. and Belgian DCM's and DATT's will get together on March 31), we will move to set up the first DCM-DATT meeting to discuss strategies for engaging with the Congolese defense establishment (civilian and military sides) and report back on our findings. Finally, a major challenge in this process will be intra-EU cooperation, which we cannot influence. The EU acts as one, although its member states undertake bilateral actions vis-a-vis the DRC that can undermine what the EU itself is doing. This will be a major challenge. End comment.

GARVELINK